92-06528/

DRAFT GUIDELINES

for the preparation of an

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

for

The Proposed Manitoba Hydro North Central Transmission Line Project

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FEBRUARY 27, 1992

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BACKGROUND

Manitoba Hydro is proposing to proceed with the North Central Transmission Line Project and related installations involving development of the electrical transmission line to connect the communities of Oxford House, God's Lake Narrows, God's River, Red Sucker Lake, Garden Hill, Wasagamack and St. Theresa Point with the provincial power grid at Kelsey.

All environmentally significant developments, proposed or operating in Manitoba are regulated by the Manitoba Environment Act (Chapter E125, CCSM). Manitoba Regulation 164/88 under the Act sets out the types of developments which are automatically subject to an assessment/licensing process prior to construction and operation. Electrical transmission lines and transformer stations of 115 kV and over but not exceeding 230 kV are identified as Class 2 Developments under the Act and are hence subject to the assessment/licensing process set out in Section 11 of the Act.

In accordance with SOR/84-467 Guidelines Respecting the Implementation of the Federal Policy on Environmental Assessment and Review, the North Central Transmission Line Project shall be subjected to federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP). The Process and Guidelines apply to any proposal that may have an environmental effect on an area of federal responsibility. The federal initiating department is the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Procedures required under the Policy are contained in SOR/84-467.

Under conditions of the Canada Manitoba Agreement on Terms of Reference for a Federal-Provincial Panel to Conduct a Public Environmental Assessment Review of the Proposed North Central Transmission Line (The Agreement), a Panel has been appointed to conduct the Assessment. The following Draft Guidelines have been developed by a joint Federal/Provincial Technical Advisory Committee(TAC) and are being recommended to the Panel for consideration.

PROCESS

The main components of the review process as outlined in The Agreement shall be:

1. Upon receipt of the project proposal, Manitoba Environment notified the public through advertisements in the newspapers and has filed a copy of the proposal in the public registries, with the Interdepartmental Planning Board, with the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office (FEARO), the Manitoba Eco Network, the Manitoba Environmental Council, and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakinak . These documents have also been filed in summary form at the other locations as set out in the Agreement. The advertisements have invited written comments and objections regarding the proposal.

2. Manitoba Environment is hereby providing to the proponent and making available to the public draft guidelines for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which have been developed in consultation with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of provincial and federal representatives. The public will be provided with the opportunity to comment to the Panel on the Draft Guidelines, in writing and/or through public meetings.

3. As soon as possible after its appointment, the Panel shall initiate a public information program and shall establish and release to the public, operating procedures for the review consistent with operating guidelines followed by the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Office.

4. The Panel shall hold meetings to obtain public input in the scoping of issues that should be assessed in the review.

5. The Panel shall issue to the proponent and make available to the public, final guidelines for the preparation of the EIS after considering comments from the public, these Draft Guidelines and any other information which the Panel considers relevant.

6. Following receipt of the EIS from the proponent, the Panel shall file it in the public registries, with the Manitoba Eco Network, the Manitoba Environmental Council, and the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakinak and with the TAC and provide a reasonable opportunity for comment on the adequacy of the document. These documents will also be filed in summary form at the other locations as agreed. The Panel shall also file a copy of the TAC review of the EIS as set out above and provide opportunity for the public to submit written comments and objections.

7. If necessary, after reviewing the EIS, the TAC report and any public comments received, the Panel may issue a deficiency statement(s) with instructions that the proponent conduct further assessment work.

8. When the Panel determines that the EIS is acceptable, it shall give reasonable notice and shall hold public hearings at communities within the impacted area and other Manitoba communities which the Panel considers appropriate.

9. Following public hearings, the Panel shall prepare a written report with conclusions and recommendations and submit it to the Manitoba Minister of the Environment and the federal Ministers of the Environment and of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The Ministers shall release the report to the public prior to making their decisions respecting the project.

10. Following receipt of the Panel Report, governmental decisions shall be made and announced in accordance with the requirements of the Manitoba Environment Act and regulations and the federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process Guidelines Order.

11. The Director of Environmental Approvals may require further information from the proponent in the event that there is insufficient information available through the review for the purposes of making a licensing decision as required by the Manitoba Environment Act.

12. Pursuant to the Manitoba Environment Act, any licensing decisions by the Director may be appealed to the Minister of Environment.

INTENT AND SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

INTENT:

The intent of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to:

* describe the proposed development and the environment within which it is to exist;

* identify the potential impacts of the North Central Transmission Line Project;

* identify the social, cultural, health and economic impacts directly related to the environmental effects of the project;

* describe proposed actions to be taken to mitigate or eliminate the impacts;

* describe any anticipated residual impacts remaining after all mitigation measures are employed and identify compensation measures required;

* propose mechanisms for monitoring of the development and research that may be considered necessary;

* provide a description of and the anticipated environmental impacts associated with the proposed decommissioning and rehabilitation scheme for the project

It is intended that the Environmental Impact Statement shall incorporate and reflect the Principals of Sustainable Development as contained in Towards a Sustainable Development Strategy for Manitobans and the developing policies under the Land and Water Strategy.

SCOPE:

The scope of the Environmental Assessment shall include examination of:

* the process of determining need for the proposal and any alternatives considered to supply electricity to the communities;

* the social, cultural, health and economic impacts directly related to the environmental effects of the project;

* potential impacts of the North Central Transmission Project, including measures intended to mitigate adverse impacts on the bio-physical environment, human health, present and currently planned resource, land and water use, aboriginal resource use, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems;

* activities associated with site preparation, construction, operation and the final disposition of all the components of the project;

* the implications of the proposal for land and resource related agreements;

* the site, corridor and route selection processes for the stations and transmission lines including definition of the study area, alternatives, evaluation criteria and selection of preferred sites, corridors and routes;

* any remaining exploration and planning activities related to the North Central Transmission Line Project and within the control and authority of Manitoba Hydro and its contractors that may have an effect on the environment;

* effects of the general influx of workers, equipment and materials on residents, land and resources;

* the adequacy of measures proposed to mitigate adverse impacts of the project and to compensate for residual adverse effects; and

* the adequacy of proposed plans and procedures for the transportation, handling and disposal of dangerous goods and hazardous materials and for response to environmental accidents and emergencies.

The geographic scope of the investigations shall include those areas directly impacted by the North Central Transmission Line.

INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL:

The information and assessment requirements for the project will be categorized into several sections. These include:

1. Project Description;
2. Environmental Setting;
3. Pre-development Planning Review;
4. Impact Assessment;
5. Mitigation;
6. Residual Impacts;
7. Monitoring and Research;
8. Public Input;
9. Technical References;
10. Report Format.

During the Assessment, the proponent is encouraged to work closely with the TAC for the North Central Transmission Line Project. The Committee will assist the proponent with any required interpretation of the Draft Guidelines, subject to the final Guidelines issued by the Panel, and will provide on-going feedback to the proponent concerning the content and methodology of the assessment. In this way, any problems which may be revealed by the initial assessment work, which were not accounted for in the Draft Guidelines, can be dealt with, and the proponent will have the opportunity to fill in deficiencies as the assessment is proceeding.

The proponent is also encouraged to co-operate with local citizen and interest groups and Native organizations which may be affected by this development.

The complexity of the North Central Transmission Line Project needs to be recognized in the EIS. The scale and detail of information considered in the assessment and presented in the EIS should be appropriate to the level of consideration given to each component of the North Central Transmission Line Project. Where appropriate, the information should be mapped or communicated using graphics.

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Environmental Impact Statement must describe the project proposal in detail. It is recognized that there are several components tc the North Central Transmission Line Project. Each component must be described separately identifying any potential sources of impact to the environment. The overall description should include the linkages between the components.

The project description should include, but not be limited to, a description of the following:

* the extent of clearing, excavation (including quarrying) and earthworks for the North Central Transmission Line and related developments;

* infrastructure development related to all components of the North Central Transmission Line Project;

* the size of required rights-of-way and station sites;

* the methods to be used to clear and maintain rights-of-way and station sites and the methods of disposal of cleared vegetation including any merchantable timber;

* the location and design of all stream crossings;

* the transmission tower types, tower and line heights, spacing intervals, and variations along the route;

* the size, clearing required, design and proposed maintenance of station sites;

* decommissioning of the existing generating facilities;

* the location and type and proposed design of all access roads and camps and related infrastructure including waste handling facilities;

* the time-table in respect of the development of the above components;

* the schedule and methods of inspection and maintenance with respect to:
  - transmission lines;
  - access roads;
  - rights-of-way and station sites including vegetation control.

While providing a description of the North Central Transmission Line Project and its operation, the EIS must report on any potential direct sources of impact to the environment. A list of potential sources would include:

* any remaining exploration and planning activities related to the Project;

* the general influx of workers, equipment and materials;

* clearing and site preparation required for the various components under review;

* quarrying for materials to be used for construction purposes;

* the transportation, handling and disposal of dangerous goods and hazardous materials;

* construction and operation of the physical components of the development;

* the development of access roads to remote sites;

* the decommissioning of any or all of the project components including site restoration at the existing diesel generating stations.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The Environmental Assessment of a development proposal must begin by understanding the base-line condition within the geographic scope of the project - the environmental setting within which the development is intended to occur. The Environmental Impact Statement must provide an overview description of the existing environment. The use of maps at a scale appropriate to the level of investigation or graphical representation is preferred as a means of communicating this information.

The information requirements listed below provide the general areas to be reported upon for each of the project components. They are categorized into two groups: bio-physical environment and socioeconomic environment. Some items in the list may only be relevant to certain components of the development. If a specific area of information is left out of consideration for any of the project components or is not available, indication of why it was missed or how and when the data will become available is required. The detail and scale of information required for the different levels of corridor siting exercises is expected to vary. Changes to base-line information is to be used to judge potential impacts when reporting in the Impact Assessment Section.

2.1 Bio-physical Environment:

* general description of climate, topography and landforms;
* surface or near surface geology particularly mineral deposits and unique geological features;
* distribution of vegetation types including merchantable forest stands, and any unique, rare or endangered plant species or habitat;
* location and classification of all surface waters;
* unique, rare or endangered fish species and their habitat;
* soil types, depths and areas of permafrost;
* wildlife resources including animal and bird species, populations, habitat and seasonal migration patterns, along with any unique, rare or endangered animal species and their habitat;
* aquatic resources, streams, rivers, lakes, flood plains, and their water quality and classification, research sites, fish habitat that sustains or supports (or has the potential to support) commercial, native and recreational activities including fishing and information on the existing fisheries;
* the importance of environmental factors to the quality of life of the existing human inhabitants in the area affected by the development should be described;
* human demographics, including general population measures and sensitive populations;

* base-line human health status including data on mortality, morbidity - accidents and violence and health care for workers including emergency response potential;

2.2 Socioeconomic Environment

* industrial, resource extraction and commercial activities;

* rural, urban or recreational residential development including lodges, outcamps, property ownership and location of residences;

* existing and proposed hydro facilities and water power reserves;

* commercial traplines including existing trappers' access trails;

* commercial fishing and wild rice harvesting areas;

* recreational and aesthetic resources including tourism, remote lodges and out-camps;

* Indian Reserves, NFA resource areas and areas for aboriginal resource and traditional uses including hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering, campsites, cabins and sites with spiritual/cultural significance within the study area;

* heritage resources including sites or objects of archaeological, paleontological, historical and/or architectural value;

* parks and ecological reserves, recreational or aesthetic resources, wildlife management areas, and heritage rivers;

* roads, airstrips and railroads;

* mining claims and Mineral Management Areas;

* infrastructure including existing health care services;

* local economies, community values and the importance of existing environmental conditions to the economy of the area;

3. PRE-DEVELOPMENT PLANNING REVIEW:

3.1 Alternatives to the Proposal:

Describe the extent of consideration and the weighting given to environmental issues during the deliberations over options for providing the required supply of electricity and selection of the North Central Transmission Line Project.

3.2 Siting Selection Criteria:

Describe the corridor alternatives, the criteria used to select new transmission line corridors and the preferred routes within the corridors, the alternatives considered and the selection of the station sites.

The description should include, as a minimum, the following information:

* the basis for selecting preferred corridors within the study areas;

* the environmental benefits/disbenefits of the various centerlines and station site alternatives within the corridors;

* the major steps used in the selection processes;

* the weighting system used to evaluate the environmental and socioeconomic parameters of alternate routes and station sites.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Provide information on all the environmental impacts associated with the North Central Transmission Line Project. Both positive and negative environmental impacts should be described and categorized as significant or insignificant, direct or indirect, short or long term. Describe also the time frames in which the impacts will occur and the magnitude and duration of the impacts.

All anticipated impacts should be described in terms of their location and severity. Where a range of impacts may result from an activity, these should be noted. "Worst case scenarios" shall be used for assessment purposes where applicable. All assessment conclusions shall be supported by credible information based on experience in Manitoba and elsewhere. Deficiencies in the information base should be clearly noted.

The environmental impacts should be related to and assessed with respect to all components identified in the ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING section which includes the assessment of potential impacts on:

* The bio-physical environment including surface and ground-water, aquatic flora and fauna, terrestrial flora and fauna, soils, geology, heritage resources and public health.;

* This assessment must include an evaluation of the impact of the construction and operation of the development on the well-being of the people, including workers, living in the areas affected. The determination of potential impacts on health should include: specific exposures, including duration, extent, multimedia pathways, and risk assessment; potential effects to human health during both construction and operation of the development; and potential cumulative and transgenerational effects.

* The socioeconomic environment including:

- resource utilization areas including forestry, mining, fishing and trapping, hunting and gathering;

- heritage and recreational resources including parks and ecological reserves;

- industrial, commercial and residential development;

- local economies, infrastructure, healthcare facilities and community values;

5. IMPACT MITIGATION

Provide information on how impacts identified in the ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT section will be mitigated and a schedule for the implementation of proposed mitigation measures. These may include: selection of an alternative means of electrical supply, changes in design or operation of facilities, routing of corridors or transmission lines, siting of stations, water control proposals, fish and terrestrial animal habitat development to achieve the objectives of the "no net loss" policy of the Federal Fisheries Act or compensation where mitigation measures are not feasible.

Provide information on plans for decommissioning the development and the restoration/rehabilitation of all disturbed or undeveloped areas associated with the plan.

The Environmental Impact Statement is to specify planned preventative and mitigative measures, during both the construction and operation of the development, regarding potential effects to human health.

6. RESIDUAL IMPACTS

Where potential impacts have been identified which cannot be prevented, eliminated or completely mitigated or no mitigation is contemplated, an explanation is required.

Anticipated residual impacts should be described and categorized as significant or insignificant, direct or indirect, short or long term. Identify any compensation measures required.

7. MONITORING AND RESEARCH

Describe any monitoring proposals that are recommended complete with a schedule for their implementation. Describe the equipment to be used, the parameters to be measured, the methodology and frequency of measurement and the mechanism for reporting results for proposed monitoring of the environmental conditions impacted by the various components of the North Central Transmission Line Project.

Describe the monitoring proposal that will be carried out relating to human health, including the identification of health indicators and the methodology for monitoring these indicators.

Describe any research that may be undertaken to provide information relating to issues that are outstanding as a result of this environmental assessment.

8. PUBLIC INPUT

Describe the program of public involvement which has taken place, or will take place, including the result of such involvement, for each phase of the project assessment.

9. TECHNICAL REFERENCE

All assessment conclusions shall be backed up by credible technical information. This information shall include:

* technical studies of similar facilities and processes which are operating elsewhere;

* original studies performed by qualified engineers or scientists, commissioned by the proponent, specific to the proposed development;

* identification of facility design documents prepared by qualified engineers as they become available;

* scientific reports and papers on topics relevant to the proposed development such as the Manitoba Surface Water Quality Objectives.

All null conclusions must be supported by credible analysis and documentation. The literature cited must include full bibliographic citation. Reference to "personal communication" must include the agency or other explanation of the person's expertise.

10. REPORT FORMAT

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIS) shall include an executive summary and be written with a minimum of technical terminology. Where highly technical portions are essential to the document, definitions or explanations shall be included. A glossary of terms shall also be provided. Deficiencies in scientific evidence should be clearly identified. This includes areas where there is no evidence specific to Manitoba.

The information in the document should maximize the use of maps, charts, diagrams and photographs for presentation. Maps and diagrams should be presented at a common scale, appropriate to represent the level of detail considered, and whereever possible, to allow direct overlay of the maps for ease of reference. Specifically maps indicating zones of impact on land and water use and habitat areas shall be on maps of a common scale.